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## A NOTE ON SENSATION AND SENTIMENT

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By E. B. TITCHENER

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In a recent number of the *Psychological Bulletin*, F. M. Urban has called the attention of experimental psychologists to Cournot's *Essai sur les fondements de nos connaissances*.<sup>1</sup> I am personally very grateful for the reference; Cournot's book is, for more than one reason, worth reading at the present day. In this Note, however, I am concerned only with a remark made by Urban. "The circumstance that Cournot uses the term 'sensation of pain,'" he writes, "where most writers of his period [the *Essai* bears date 1851] would have said feeling of pain, makes this passage sound quite modern."

The remark is a little ambiguous. It may mean that the phrases "sensation de douleur," "sensation de plaisir," are of recent coinage in French psychology, and that we might therefore have expected Cournot to continue the traditional use of *sentiment*. Or it may mean, again, that writers of the period of 1840-1860 had swung away from the word *sensation*, as applied to 'physical' pleasure and pain, and had adopted in its place the word *sentiment*, which has now once more, in contemporary French writers, given way to the older term. On the former interpretation, Cournot would be an innovator; on the latter, he might be considered either as reactionary or as more modern than the majority of his day and generation. I take it that Urban had in mind the traditional use of *sentiment*.

In fact, however, neither of these views appears to be correct. The phrases in question are very much older than Cournot, and their occurrence had been fairly continuous—in spite of all the vacillation of French terminology—for more than a century before he published; Cournot was not an innovator. Nor do I think that the year 1848, important as it was for French philosophy, marked any great change in this department of psychological terminology; the usage of Taine and of Rabier simply continues that of their predecessors. I base these conclusions, in the main, upon notes taken while I was preparing my lectures on *Feeling and Attention*. I have verified those references, and have here added a few more. The evidence, no doubt, is fragmentary; but it may be sufficient for the immediate purpose.

The following paragraphs would be more readable if I had worked up these notes into something like an essay on French terminology. Perhaps they may be useful, in other hands, as raw materials for a study that shall go behind the terms to the ideas which the terms are meant to convey. The French psychology which is here touched is, like the English psychology of association, terribly mixed up with theory of knowledge; and in the one case as in the other a confused terminology is the reflection of unclear thinking. An historical study would be instructive, if only for the parallel it affords to our own

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<sup>1</sup> An Historical Note, *Psych. Bull.*, xi., 1914, 24-26.

long struggle towards definite technical expression; but it would also, I believe, throw light upon that struggle, inasmuch as the French writers are, on the whole, more perspicuous than the English;<sup>2</sup> it is oftentimes surprising to find how distinctly the author's meaning stands out from a sheer medley of popular and technical terms.

I hope, then, that some student of the history of psychology may be led, by the following notes, to attack the larger problem. This problem, be it remarked, is in no sense a problem of classification,—for which we might go to the indispensable Ueberweg-Heinze. The question is rather that of disentangling psychological fact from logical construction, observation from reasoning and interpretation; and it must be answered, not only from the works of the *idéologues*, but also from those of their spiritualistic and positivistic successors.

As to the notes themselves, I cannot be sure that I have always gone to the right books; some of the writers quoted are voluminous; but I have not, at any rate, made a prejudiced selection. I cannot be sure, either, that there is not already extant an essay or monograph that deals exhaustively with the subject; I can only say that I have not found anything of the sort; the historical chapters and articles that I have run across have been either very limited in scope or very sketchy.<sup>3</sup>

# I

Descartes regularly employs the term *sentiment*.<sup>4</sup> Malebranche (1674-5) calls the perceptions of the senses *sentiments ou sensations*. We therefore find pleasure and pain numbered among the *sensations*, while we also find sensations of color, etc., termed *sentiments*.<sup>5</sup> Bossuet (1722), though he too often uses *sentiment* and *sensation* indifferently, remarks: "nous avons rangé le plaisir et la douleur avec les sensations."<sup>6</sup>

Buffon, in the *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* (1749-1804), declares that "la douleur et le plaisir sont des pures sensations." Yet he writes in another volume: "distinguons donc la sensation du sentiment: . . . l'essence du sentiment, son caractère unique est le plaisir ou la douleur."<sup>7</sup> Condillac, although he affirms in the *Traité des sensations* (1754) that pleasure-pain is inherent in the very nature of sensation, and therefore makes it his rule to speak of *plaisir, douleur* absolutely, nevertheless can write: "les sen-

<sup>2</sup> Or is this impression illusory, due to the relative unfamiliarity of a foreign language, and the restricted number of associations that its words and phrases arouse? Perhaps both factors are involved.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to my colleagues, Dr. W. S. Foster and Mr. H. G. Bishop, for following up various bibliographical trails. I have also to thank Dr. L. N. Wilson for the loan of a number of books from the Clark Library.

<sup>4</sup> E. g., *Passions de l'âme*, 1649, art. 94.

<sup>5</sup> N. Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité*, in *Oeuvres*, ed. J. Simon, iii, 1871, 30; 85, 89, 96, 98, 103, 346, etc.; 89, 93, 104, 114, etc.

<sup>6</sup> J. B. Bossuet, *De la connoissance de Dieu et de soi-même*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, v., 1846, 22, 53.

<sup>7</sup> G. L. L. de Buffon, *Oeuvres complètes*, nouvelle édition dirigée par M. Lamouroux, xvi. (*Histoire des mammifères*, i.), 1824, 57, 79, 81; cf. xiii. (*Histoire de l'homme*, i.), 1828, 317; and xviii. (*Histoire des mammifères*, iii.), 1824, 395.

sations qui viennent par le tact . . . sont la chaleur et le froid, et différentes espèces de plaisirs et de douleurs."<sup>8</sup>

Diderot's usage is vacillating, both in the *Éléments de physiologie* (written 1774-1780)<sup>9</sup> and in the *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772). The editorial article *Sensations* speaks of the *sentiment du plaisir et de la douleur*, and the author of the article *Sensibilité*, *Sentiment* is allowed to refer to pleasure and pain as *les deux sensations élémentaires*.<sup>10</sup> Condorcet, like Descartes, regularly employs the word *sentiment*.<sup>11</sup> Cabanis gives us a quotable passage: "les sensations de plaisir sont celles que la nature nous invite à chercher: elle nous invite également à fuir celles de la douleur."<sup>12</sup>

Bichat (1800) is the author of the famous phrase: "l'habitude émousse le sentiment," and we might expect him to be careful in his use of words. We find, in fact, the usual vacillation. "Le propre de l'habitude est d'émousser le sentiment, de ramener toujours le plaisir ou la douleur à l'indifférence": this statement accords with the definition of sentiment as one of the effects of sensation. "Le propre de l'habitude est d'agir en émoussant la vivacité du sentiment, de transformer en sensations indifférentes celles de plaisirs<sup>13</sup> ou de peine": here pleasure and pain are sensations; and Bichat speaks elsewhere of *une vive sensation de douleur*.<sup>14</sup> Pinel, too, writes of "les sensations de peine ou de plaisir."<sup>15</sup> And Tracy is emphatic on the point, as matter both of doctrine and of terminology, that pleasure and pain are sensations.<sup>16</sup>

Lamarck's general word is *sentiment*,—which, however, is very often made interchangeable with *sensation*. *Douleur* is expressly

<sup>8</sup> E. B. de Condillac, *Oeuvres complètes*, iii., 1798, 58, 243. Characteristic phrases occur also 40, 76, 96, 122 f., 174 f., 205.

<sup>9</sup> D. Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, ix., 1875, 311, 356, 439; ct. 374, 381.

<sup>10</sup> *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences*, etc., xxx., 1780, 735, 741.

<sup>11</sup> M. J. A. N. C. de Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (written 1794-5), in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by A. C. O'Connor and F. Arago, vi., 1847, 340, 544.

<sup>12</sup> P. J. G. Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, 1802; Paris, 1824, i., 192. I am inclined to think that this passage is unique: it is, however, not an afterthought, as it occurs in *Mémoires de l'Institut National, Sciences Morales et Politiques*, I., Thermidor An VI., 207. The nearest approach to it that I have found is i, 1824, 180; ct. iii., 179. *Impression* seems to be used more or less indifferently for excitation and mental process (e. g., i., 190; ii., 276); *sentiment* is very common; phrases like *sensations voluptueuses, agréables* (ii., 231, 276) are also frequent.

<sup>13</sup> The plural is probably due to a printer's error.

<sup>14</sup> M. F. X. Bichat, *Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort*, ed. by F. Magendie, 1829, 57, 115, 116. Magendie himself writes (58): "le plaisir et la douleur sont toujours des sensations absolues."

<sup>15</sup> P. Pinel, *Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale ou la manie*, An IX. (1800-1), xxiv.; the word *sentiment* is also used.—The *Encyc. Brit.* dates this work 1791.

<sup>16</sup> A. L. C. Destutt de Tracy, *Éléments d'idéologie: idéologie proprement dite*, (1801) 1826. For terminology cf. 19, 26; for doctrine, 25, 26 f., 27 f.

termed a sensation.<sup>17</sup> The discussion of pleasure leads us to the *sentiment intérieur* or *sentiment intime d'existence*, which plays a large part in Lamarck's physiological psychology. This *sentiment*, which is the resultant of a confused medley of organic sensations, may be thrown into action either indirectly, by the operations of intelligence, or directly, by a *besoin* which has itself been touched off by a sensation. Among the *besoins* of this 'physical' sort are, we are told, those "de fuir la douleur, de chercher le plaisir ou le bien-être." But another passage informs us that the *besoins physiques* are "ceux de se soustraire à la douleur, au malaise, de satisfaire à la faim, à la soif, etc." while the *besoins moraux* are "tels que ceux de chercher le plaisir, le bien-être, . . . etc." What the *plaisir ou bien-être* actually is, does not appear; probably it is of two kinds, physical and moral, sensation and idea.<sup>18</sup>

## II

In sharp contrast with Tracy stands Laromiguière (1815-18), who combats the indiscriminate use of *sensation*, and professes himself to write with rigorous precision. His fundamental term is *sentiment*, of which he notes four distinct kinds: the sensation-feeling or sensation, the feeling of the action or operation of the mind's own faculties, the feeling of relation, and the moral feeling.<sup>19</sup> Chronologically, sensation is the first thing in mind: "la sensation, c'est la première manière de sentir que nous remarquons en nous." Logically, however, sensation is "une idée complexe;" "l'effet immédiat de l'impression que les objets font sur nous" is the *sentiment*; "la sensation consiste dans le sentiment rapporté aux organes du corps, ou aux objets extérieurs;" "la sensation a son origine dans le sentiment; et on peut la définir, un sentiment jugé ou rapporté hors de l'âme."<sup>20</sup> Further, sensation may be taken in two ways: specifically, as color, tone, and so forth; and generically, as affecting the mind for good or ill (*plaisir ou douleur*) and as informing or reminding it of its own existence (*sentiment du moi*).<sup>21</sup>

But this distinction offers, of course, an admirable opportunity for the sort of terminological confusion that we have found elsewhere. Laromiguière does not fail to take advantage of it. Now it is the *sentiment*, now the *sensation*, that affects the mind;<sup>22</sup> pleasure and pain are *sentiments*, while yet there are painful or indifferent *sensations*;<sup>23</sup> the pleasure that we gain from a beautiful sight is a *sentiment-sensation*, that is, a sensation proper.<sup>24</sup> The time is not yet ripe for standardisation, and for all the author's efforts his language goes the accustomed way.

Next on my list is the *Physiologie du goût* (1825). I have no wish to quote this celebrated work as an authority on technical terms;

<sup>17</sup> J. B. P. A. de Monet de Lamarck, *Philosophie zoologique*, etc., (1809) 1873, i., 6, 9 f., 26; ii., 155, 166, 171, 184, 235, 245, 306.

<sup>18</sup> ii., 257 f., 260, 297, 305, 357.

<sup>19</sup> P. Laromiguière, *Leçons de philosophie*, etc., 1844, i., 159; ii., 56, etc.

<sup>20</sup> ii., 44 f.; i., 160, 316.

<sup>21</sup> i., 71; ii., 43 f., 131.

<sup>22</sup> ii., 47, 131.

<sup>23</sup> ii., 140; i., 71, 160.

<sup>24</sup> ii., 367.

but I suppose that it reflects the terminology of its day, and I suppose that Cournot—like everybody else—had read it. If that is the case, he found pleasure and pain called sensations in *Meditations* 14, 19, 26.<sup>25</sup>

I turn to the physiologists by profession. Bland in 1830 speaks freely and often of sensations of pleasure and pain;<sup>26</sup> so does Dufour in 1833.<sup>27</sup> For Longet (1850) pleasure and pain are sensations of the "sensibilité générale;" the phrase 'sensation of pain' occurs; I have not chanced on 'sensation of pleasure,' although appetite, the first and agreeable state of hunger, is called sensation.<sup>28</sup> In the section on Hunger an effort is made to distinguish between the localised *sensation* and the general *sentiment*; but the distinction is not carried through; and presently we read that "la faim parle plus haut que les lois, que la raison, que les sentiments!"<sup>29</sup> Béraud (1853) goes into greater detail. Every sensation, general or special, internal or external, may appear as "indifférente, agréable ou pénible."<sup>30</sup> *Douleur* is not a sensation, but a degree of sensation; every sensation may pass over into pain; pleasure-pain depends, in fact, upon the state of the organ or tissue, so that, for instance, "le besoin d'uriner, . . . comme toute sensation interne, est *plaisir* ou *peine*, selon qu'on cède ou qu'on résiste à son vœu."<sup>31</sup> Yet we meet, it need hardly be said, with the phrase "sensations de douleur."<sup>32</sup> As for the *sentiments*, they are at first internal sensations, and include needs, desires, passions, satisfactions, as well as hunger, thirst, etc. Later in the work the "*sentiments* proprement dites" have become affective processes, "émotions dites d'affection et de repulsion, de plaisir ou de déplaisir;" "la répétition émousse le sentiment, c'est-à-dire les émotions qu'elles font naître."<sup>33</sup>

Béclard (1855), in his section on Touch, speaks without hesitation of the sensation of pain.<sup>34</sup> Touch and pain do not, indeed, belong to different senses; they are only different modes of expression, or different degrees, of the same sensibility.<sup>35</sup> As for pleasure, "les sensations voluptueuses du tact . . . constituent, en quelque sorte, le pendant de la douleur." Here is modernity with a vengeance! We are reminded of Stumpf's theory of affective sensations, and we have an anticipation (since the "sensations voluptueuses" are assimilated to tickling) of the theory of Bourdon.<sup>36</sup> But touch-pain and

<sup>25</sup> A. Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût*, nouvelle édition revue avec soin, Paris, n. d., 175, 216, 218, 259, 265.

<sup>26</sup> P. Bland, *Traité élémentaire de physiologie philosophique*, 1830, i., 178, 332; ii., 76, 79, 80, etc.

<sup>27</sup> P. Dufour, *Essai sur l'étude de l'homme*, i., 1833, 46, 63 f., 330.

<sup>28</sup> F. A. Longet, *Traité de physiologie*, 1873, i., 23; iii., 149; for the general position, see iii., 585, 591.

<sup>29</sup> i., 24.

<sup>30</sup> B. J. Béraud, *Éléments [Manuel] de physiologie de l'homme*, etc., i., 1856-7, 143.

<sup>31</sup> i., 143, 153, 155, 161.

<sup>32</sup> ii., 772.

<sup>33</sup> i., 144; ii., 827, 829 f.; cf. 619.

<sup>34</sup> J. Béclard, *Traité élémentaire de physiologie humaine*, 1862, 882, 884, 893; cf. 887.

<sup>35</sup> Touch and pain, 884 f.; temperature and pain, 893.

<sup>36</sup> 896: cf. my *Feeling and Attention*, 1908, 81 ff., 338.

touch-pleasure do not account for the agreeableness and disagreeableness of hunger and thirst, smell and taste. Man is endowed, Bèclard tells us, not only with intellectual faculties based on sensations, but also with affective faculties whose point of departure can be traced to organic needs. "Les instincts sont des besoins plus ou moins impérieux, qui ont pour sanction le plaisir et la douleur;" and these instincts, as motives to reasoned action, as 'perceived' by man and not left to act blindly, become *sentiments*. The position is not further worked out.<sup>37</sup>

With these physiological books we have overshot the year 1851, the date of Cournot's *Essai*; but I wished to show that the use of *sensation* in regard to pleasure and pain is continuous. I turn back now to the philosophers. In his chapter on the *vie animale* Comte writes (1838): "ce sont les sensations intérieures qui se rapportent à la satisfaction des divers besoins essentiels soit de nutrition, soit de reproduction, et auxquelles il faut joindre, dans l'état pathologique, les différentes douleurs produites par une altération quelconque."<sup>38</sup> Pleasures and pains are here sensations, though the following essay, on the intellectual and moral functions, speaks the language of Gall. Maine de Biran, in an essay which appeared for the first time in 1841, declares: "partout où est la vie là est aussi quelque degré de sensation affective de plaisir ou de douleur."<sup>39</sup> Jouffroy, again, furnishes us with passages like this (1845): "l'homme est-il empêché dans son développement intellectuel et productif, il éprouve une sensation désagréable. Est-il au contraire aidé, il éprouve une sensation agréable. Etre contrarié et impuissant, voilà pour lui la peine. Etre secouru et puissant, voilà pour lui le plaisir."<sup>40</sup>

### III

Bouillier (1865), like Laromiguière, makes a great profession of accuracy, and even devotes a chapter to the historical "équivoques du mot Sensation." *Sensibilité* is defined as the faculty of experiencing pleasure and pain.<sup>41</sup> The manifestations of this faculty are *sensations*: sensation is set off, as a "phénomène purement affectif," from the *perceptions des sens*. So we have "sensation de douleur," "sensation de bien-être ou de malaise," etc.<sup>42</sup> That is all in order; but Bouillier's usage is otherwise disappointing. *Sensation* and *sentiment* are, from the very first, run together, and where they are distinguished the difference between them is left to the reader to supply.<sup>43</sup>

Taine (1870) writes that "les nerfs des muscles, comme ceux de la peau, peuvent donner naissance aus sensations de contact, de

<sup>37</sup> 20 ff., 22 f., 869, 877, 1022, 1024 f.

<sup>38</sup> A. Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, iii., 1838, 741, 806.

<sup>39</sup> F. P. G. Maine de Biran, *Oeuvres philosophiques* publiées par V. Cousin, iii., 1841, 218. The essay, which contains a long discussion of coenaesthesia, was apparently written in 1813 and retouched in 1823. Cousin himself, in his popular work *Du vrai, du beau et du bien*, (1836) 1881, 136, etc. speaks of *la sensation de l'agréable*.

<sup>40</sup> T. Jouffroy, *Cours d'esthétique*, 1845, 12 f., 38 f., 40, 268.

<sup>41</sup> F. Bouillier, *Du plaisir et de la douleur*, 1885, 8, 41.

<sup>42</sup> 26 f., 50, 309.

<sup>43</sup> ix. f., 23, 176, 300, 306 f., 338.

froid et de chaud, de plaisir et de douleur."<sup>44</sup> And Rabier (1884) distinguishes "les sensations de l'ordre affectif, ou plaisirs et douleurs sensibles, et les sensations de l'ordre représentatif."<sup>45</sup>

So we have come—though not by a series of minimal changes—from Malebranche down to the present day. It remains only to point out that Cournot's *Essai* has itself no settled terminology. In the passages quoted by Urban, Cournot uses "sensation de plaisir," "sensation de douleur," as well as "sensation douloureuse ou voluptueuse;" he also speaks of the "sentiment intime d'effort musculaire;" and elsewhere again he identifies sensation with "affection sensorielle," and makes the ear "la siège d'affections agréables ou désagréables."<sup>46</sup> Both the forms of expression and their variation reflect, I believe, the usage of his day.

If, then, my evidence can be regarded as adequate, the conclusion of this Note is that, during a period which extends from the generation next after Descartes to the present time, the word *sensation* has been used freely and naturally, by French philosophers and physiologists, to denote pleasure and pain.

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<sup>44</sup> H. Taine, *De l'intelligence*, i., 1883, 218.

<sup>45</sup> E. Rabier, *Leçons de philosophie: Psychologie*, 1896, 93. Rabier furnishes the basis for J. M. Baldwin's treatment in *Handbook of Psychology: Senses and Intellect*, 1890, 82 ff.

<sup>46</sup> A. A. Cournot, *Essai sur les fondements de nos connaissances*, etc., i., 1851, 186 f., 199, 215, 227, 396 f.